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ABSTRACT

A survey of 601 leaders was conducted to identify the concerns of those who are most involved with decision making about higher education and what they see for the future. Individuals surveyed included professors, higher education deans and administrators, government officials, and business leaders. The study found that disagreements between business executives and educators are sometimes wide-ranging. From the perspective of businesspeople, higher education should be more efficient and financially accountable, more focused on what students really need to learn, and more mindful of the need to cut costs and charge students more before asking for more subsidies from the public till. They also want higher education to be less preoccupied with issues of race, and more focused on teaching. Higher education professionals see the universities as serving a different mission, and vigorously object to the idea that higher education should be judged by the standards of efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of business. (JM)

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TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

January 1999

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TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education

By John Immerwahr

January 1999

Conducted and Reported by Public Agenda
for
The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

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Introduction

A casual reader of news about higher education could easily be confused about the status of America's colleges and universities. On the one hand, the picture is overwhelmingly positive. Millions of Americans are attending college, and students from around the world are flocking to the United States to study in our institutions.[1] American universities are world leaders in science, medicine, technology, and a host of other research areas. While students may be drinking too much, the unrest that tore campuses apart in the 60s and 70s has long since subsided.

At the same time, there are disturbing signs. The public is worried about the rising price tag of higher education, and many fear that college will soon be out of reach for many families.[2] Administrators say they are trapped between escalating costs and limited revenue sources. Conservative critics say that tenured radicals have trivialized real knowledge and teaching in favor of endless squabbles about race, class, and gender, while technology-based critics think that our traditional colleges are dinosaurs that will be replaced by commercial vendors of distance-learning.

What are the concerns of those who are most involved with decision-making about higher education, and what do they see for the future?

What are the concerns of those who are most involved with decision-making about higher education, and what do they see for the future? To answer these questions, we conducted a mail survey of leaders across the country. We received responses from 601 individuals, including professors, higher education deans and administrators, government officials, and business leaders. The survey was conducted in the fall of 1998; the methodology section describes the sample and procedures in detail. We intend to follow up this study with a survey of the general public in the coming year.

Our questions were formulated on the basis of a series of confidential telephone interviews with a panel of leaders representing a variety of different perspectives on higher education, and group meetings held at two conferences, one for faculty and administrators and another for legislators and their staffs. We also called a number of the individuals who had completed our mail survey for further amplification of their responses. Quotes from these confidential interviews are included in our report to help flesh out the numerical findings. Staff members of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education were also consulted for their expertise and advice.

What emerges is a complex picture with broad agreement about some questions, and deep disagreement about others. Most striking are the areas of agreement, with leaders from all four groups taking a similar perspective both on the

strengths of our higher education system and some of the problems it faces. Specifically, we found widespread consensus on the value of higher education both to society and to individuals, the overall quality of higher education in this country, and the importance of insuring that qualified students will not be priced out of a higher education.

The Most Serious Problem of All

We also found agreement on what these leaders take to be the most serious problem facing higher education. For these leaders, the real obstacle in producing an educated society is not the price tag, but the fact that many students are not sufficiently prepared to take advantage of a college education. From the perspective of our respondents, the most critical factor in higher education is the responsibility taken by students themselves. No amount of financial investment in higher education can, in the eyes of these leaders, replace the importance of having students who are motivated to advance their own learning.

Beyond these areas of consensus, we also found serious areas of difference and disagreement, especially between educators and members of the business community. The major dispute concerns how well colleges and universities are administered, whether they are teaching the right things, and what steps should be taken to meet the rising cost of producing higher education in this country. These disagreements send a clear message about the need for dialogue and clarification between leaders inside and outside the halls of academia. Higher education leaders are convinced that they will need increasing financial support from the society at large. But they may have trouble getting that support if they cannot convince other leaders—especially from the business community—that higher education is doing its own work effectively. We also found other areas of disagreement, concerning issues such as teaching load, research, tenure, and racial balance.

The findings are presented in two separate sections: Areas of Consensus and Areas of Disagreement.

Summary of Findings

FINDING ONE: Leaders responding to the survey believe a strong higher education system is vitally important to the well-being of American society.

FINDING TWO: Most leaders think America has the best higher education system in the world.

FINDING THREE: An overwhelming majority of leaders believe it is essential to insure that higher education is accessible to every qualified and motivated student.

FINDING FOUR: But leaders are convinced that today the vast majority of qualified and motivated students can get a college education if they want one.

FINDING FIVE: Most leaders believe that lack of student motivation and responsibility is a more important obstacle to getting a higher education than is lack of money.

FINDING SIX: The most serious problem facing higher education, according to leaders responding to our survey, is that too many students are not sufficiently prepared academically to receive a higher education.

FINDING SEVEN: Business leaders and academics disagree about how well colleges and systems of higher education are operated.

FINDING EIGHT: Although leaders across sectors agree that students need to learn thinking and communication skills, business leaders disagree with educators about the performance of higher education in teaching students what they need to know, and also about the importance of other goals such as training students in the humanities.

FINDING NINE: Business executives want higher education to cut costs and students to pay more before coming to government for more funding. Other leaders see government as the first line of support.

FINDING TEN: Business executives want professors to teach more, focus more on research that is relevant to society, and rely more on technology.

FINDING ELEVEN: The institution of tenure makes more sense to those who have it than to anyone else.

FINDING TWELVE: When it comes to racial balance in the nation's colleges, business leaders are more apt to say things should evolve naturally; the other three leadership groups prefer a more proactive approach. Very few in any group favor quotas.

Part I: Areas of Consensus

We found six main areas of consensus among the groups of leaders we surveyed (professors, higher education deans and administrators, government officials, and business leaders). Since the similarities of the leaders' views on these areas of consensus are more interesting than the differences are, we report most of the findings in this section as the combined results for all four groups. Supporting tables presented at the end of the report give the breakouts by each group for selected questions.

FINDING ONE

Leaders responding to the survey believe a strong higher education system is vitally important to the well-being of American society.

The people we surveyed—faculty, higher education administrators, and leaders of business and government—invariably stressed the importance of higher education to American society. In effect, our respondents see the nation's colleges and universities as the site where the nation does its thinking, as well as the place where students are taught to think. As one professor said:

> *Our society has great expectations of higher education. We don't really look to other institutions as a resource for the future. Higher education's job is not just to train students, but to contribute to and answer the questions we face about society, quality of life, and health.*

Our respondents see the nation's colleges and universities as the site where the nation does its thinking, as well as the place where students are taught to think.

One of the most important contributions that higher education makes to the nation as a whole is to foster economic growth. Our respondents are nearly unanimous in their view that "a strong higher education system is key to the continued economic growth and progress of the U.S.," with 97% of all respondents saying that this sentiment is either very or somewhat close to their own position. Equally high percentages (92%) endorse the view that the nation's colleges are a crucial source of technological and scientific innovation.

Another measure of the importance of higher education to these leaders is their sense that the nation needs a large number of educated workers. A majority (64%) feel the nation can never have too many college graduates. And more than seven in ten (73%) believe their own state currently needs more college-educated workers so that it can attract more high-tech businesses.

Higher education is not only important for the society, but also for individuals. One sign of this is the educational achievement of our respondents themselves. Eighty percent of the business leaders have a B.A. or higher, and educational accomplishment is even higher among the other groups. Not surprisingly, they see an emphasis on a college degree coming from parents. Nearly three in four leaders (73%) say that most parents believe that it is critical for their children to graduate from college. In effect, a college degree now means what a high school degree used to mean. As one professor said:

> *The purpose of higher education has really changed. We are no longer educating an elite population, but instead building a usable body of skills for the society as a whole.*

These leaders believe that higher education is not only important now, but is also becoming more so. More than eight in ten (81%) say that getting a college education is more important than it was ten years ago.

FINDING TWO

Most leaders think America has the best higher education system in the world.

The leaders responding to this survey are convinced that, compared to other higher education systems, America's colleges and universities are in a league of their own. Nearly three in four (73%) either fully or partially endorse the view that America's system of higher education is the best in the world. Although business leaders have their own criticisms of higher education, they also support this position by a margin of more than two to one (65% to 31%).

The fact that so many foreign students come to this country to study is frequently mentioned as evidence that our colleges and universities produce a world-class product to be proud of. As one business executive said:

> *I think our higher education system is probably one of America's greatest strengths. Looking at inflows and outflows, the attendance of foreigners in higher education is outstanding. Indeed, we do better in this area than we do in agriculture, computers, tourism, or anything. Clearly the world picks the United States. On a global basis, this is our strongest product.*

What comes through loud and clear, in other words, is that despite the criticisms leaders may have of higher education, they view it as a high quality institution that makes a real contribution to American society. As one professor said, speaking of the many criticisms and proposals for change, "Let's remember not to kill the goose that laid the golden egg."

- More than three in four (78%) feel that the colleges in their state are doing a good (62%) or even an excellent (16%) job.
- Sixty-five percent believe that higher education gives college graduates a good return for their money.

FINDING THREE

An overwhelming majority of leaders believe it is essential to insure that higher education is accessible to every qualified and motivated student.

The growing importance of higher education has focused greater attention on the question of who can and cannot attend America's institutions of higher education. In effect, the leaders we surveyed do not want to see qualified and motivated students shut out of the opportunity of obtaining a higher education. As one professor said, "If we screen people out of a college education, we are committing them not just to a second-class existence, but to a third-class existence."

The leaders we surveyed do not want to see qualified and motivated students shut out of the opportunity of obtaining a higher education.

In most areas of the country, there is a wide variety of higher education institutions of different types, many of which are essentially open to any qualified high school graduate. So the question of access becomes a question about whether a college education is financially possible for the majority of qualified students. Our respondents overwhelmingly believe that money alone should not exclude any qualified person from getting an education beyond secondary schooling. Large majorities of our respondents said that the following views are either very or somewhat close to their own:

- Society should not allow the price of a college education to prevent qualified and motivated students from attending college (92%).
- Because a college education is the ticket to a middle-class life, it is crucial that it be affordable to everyone (75%).

Several of the leaders interviewed said that insuring access to higher education is essential to preserving the social stability of American society. As one college administrator said:

> *Unless the working middle class has access to education, they are going to be very pessimistic about the chance of making it in society. But what holds societies together is optimism, the feeling that our children can make it. Once we lose that, it is all over.*

FINDING FOUR

But leaders are convinced that today the vast majority of qualified and motivated students can get a college education if they want one.

Table 1

Access to College: The View of Leaders

Which better describes your state?

	Total	Profs.	Admin./Deans	Gov't.	Business
The vast majority of qualified people who want to go to college find a way to pay for it.	75%	71%	74%	67%	87%
OR					
Many qualified people who want to go to college cannot find a way to pay for it.	19%	16%	22%	28%	11%

Note: The wording of questions in tables may be edited slightly for space. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or to the omission of some answer categories.

Our respondents are convinced that obtaining a higher education is not currently out of reach for most students who are qualified academically. As Table 1 shows, three quarters of our leadership sample feel that, in their state, the vast majority of qualified students can find a way to pay for a college education. Fewer than one in five leaders overall think that there are many qualified students who cannot afford a higher education. One of our respondents, a faculty member whom we called for additional commentary, said it this way:

> *Pretty much anyone who wants to go can go, and I think that is the case across the country. They can work their way through and get it.*

Regarding the question of access to higher education, we found, in fact, that leaders are much more optimistic than the public as a whole. In *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education*, our most recent study of public attitudes toward higher education, we presented a somewhat similar question to the general public and found a much different reaction.[3] Specifically, the public is divided (49% to 45%) on whether or not most of those who are qualified for a higher education have the opportunity to receive one (see Table 2).

Table 2

Access to College: The View of the Public

Do you believe that currently in your state:

	General Public
The vast majority of people who are qualified to go to college have the opportunity to do so?	49%
OR	
There are many people who are qualified to go but don't have the opportunity to do so?	45%

Source: John Immerwahr, *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education* (San Jose: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and Public Agenda, 1998).

Although leaders are convinced that access is not currently a problem, they are also concerned about the rising price of a college education, and the impact that this price may have in the future:

- Nearly three in four (74%) feel that, compared to ten years ago, paying for a college education has become more difficult.

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- Seven in ten (71%) feel that paying for a college education will be even more difficult ten years from now.
- Eight-three percent think that the debt students must take on to pay for college is either a very serious or somewhat serious problem.

FINDING FIVE

Most leaders believe that lack of student motivation and responsibility is a more important obstacle to getting a higher education than is lack of money.

For these leaders, access to a college education alone is meaningless if students are not sufficiently motivated to take advantage of it. What really matters, in other words, is the degree to which students are willing to take responsibility for their own education.

We asked respondents to choose among three possible factors—lack of motivation and direction, lack of money, or lack of skills—as the main reason why some students drop out of college. The overwhelming choice is "a lack of motivation and direction" (69%). Very few see "a lack of money" as the main reason (13%), and even fewer (7%) explain the dropout rate in terms of "a lack of skills."

The respondents are also convinced, by an overwhelming margin of 88% to 9%, that the benefits of a college education depend on the effort the student makes, rather than on the quality of the college attended.

The respondents are also convinced, by an overwhelming margin of 88% to 9%, that the benefits of a college education depend on the effort the student makes, rather than on the quality of the college attended. The sense is that a motivated student can do well even in an underfunded and overcrowded college, while an unmotivated student will gain little even from the best institution of higher education.

The emphasis on student responsibility also informs the way leaders think about how students should finance their education. More than seven in ten (73%) stress that students only appreciate the value of their college education when they have some personal responsibility for paying for its costs. In the eyes of these leaders, a European approach to higher education, where higher education is essentially free, would undercut the importance of the student's own motivation and contribution. As a college administrator said:

> *College should be affordable, but certainly not just given away. I believe people have to make an investment in what is dear to them and what will profit them. They don't have to be loaded with debt to do it, but something we work for and pay for has more meaning.*

The leaders we surveyed are concerned that too many students already regard a college education as some kind of entitlement. Nearly six out of ten leaders (59%) at least partially endorse the view that "too many students feel they are entitled to a college education regardless of their academic qualifications." This attitude on the part of students is somewhat more troubling to those who have to deal with students: 66% of the college professors in our sample say this is very or

somewhat close to their view. As one professor we interviewed said:

> *I see students who refuse to take responsibility for their own success. They don't come to class, don't do well on their work, but then they blame the institution. I insist that individuals have to take responsibility for their own learning.*

The respondents favor options for paying for college that support the values of responsibility and motivation. We presented four options for college financing to our respondents: work-study, tax breaks, subsidized loans, and direct financial aid. Not surprisingly, given their feelings about motivation and responsibility, our respondents are most supportive of work-study as a way to help students pay for higher education, with 84% saying that the government should rely more on work-study as a means of making college affordable. The advantage to work-study seems to be that it most helps those students who are willing to put in extra effort themselves. There is also strong support for tax breaks, with 75% saying that government should rely more on this method. Support for tax breaks may be driven by the perception that they are a way of supporting families who are willing to work to provide funding for college. The other two methods—loans and direct aid—are less popular, with 50% saying these should be used more.

The theme of responsibility may also be important when leaders are asked about community service: 63% support the idea of students being required by colleges to do community service in order to learn civic responsibility.

This insistence on the responsibility of individual students means that these leaders view higher education in rather different terms than what is often said about K–12 education. In this country, K–12 schooling is provided free of charge, and, indeed, young people are legally obliged to attend school. The idea of charging people for education in a public school violates our whole philosophy of education. But when it comes to college, the focus shifts completely. Our hypothesis is that, when it comes to higher education, the emphasis switches to the responsibility of the individual student. Thus the fact that students have to pay at least some of the costs of their own education is a good thing because it helps screen out those who are less motivated. When a high school student has problems or drops out of school, there may be a greater tendency to blame the high school. But when a college student drops out, the blame, as we have seen, falls on the individual student's lack of motivation.

FINDING SIX

The most serious problem facing higher education, according to leaders responding to our survey, is that too many students are not sufficiently prepared academically to receive a higher education.

Table 3

Top-Ranked Problems Facing Colleges

How serious a problem is this?

	Total % saying very serious	*Total % saying somewhat serious*
Too many new students need remedial education.	53%	35%
The debt students must take on to pay for college is too high.	35%	48%
Too few African-Americans and Hispanics graduate from college.	32%	41%

We presented our respondents with a list of 16 possible problems facing higher education. The responses give a good picture of the issues that most concern leaders. The item that topped the list was that "too many new students need remedial education." Eighty-eight percent of our respondents regard this as a problem, with a full 53% saying that it is a very serious problem. Indeed, poor preparation ranks higher than the next highest items of concern, which are student debt and the low percentage of minority graduates (see Table 3).

In theory, our respondents feel that our society needs more college-trained workers and citizens. But they do not want to do this by lowering the standards for admission and graduation. Instead, they would like to raise the admission standards (which would presumably lower the number of people who attend colleges), and also see unqualified students get technical training rather than crowd into colleges and universities.

- Nearly nine in ten (89%) want to make trade and technical school a more appealing option for high school graduates who are not qualified for college.
- Three in four (76%) feel that raising admission standards would be either very effective or somewhat effective in improving higher education.
- Sixty percent feel that it is a somewhat or very serious problem that too many colleges have academic standards that are too low.

Our respondents are especially opposed to sending unprepared students to four-year institutions. Only 19% think that applicants who lack the necessary skills to succeed in school should be admitted to a four-year school and given remediation. The large majority (76%) want these students either not to be admitted at all (22%) or only to be admitted to a two-year college (54%). As one of our leaders from a business background said:

> *When a student comes into a college situation, that person should be able to read a textbook and write reports. How can you do that if the basic skills are not there?*

There is some controversy about whether the current dropout rate is too high. A few of the leaders we talked to were outraged by the percentages of dropouts. One leader from outside the education community put it this way:

> *Colleges and universities think they are doing so well, but their retention rates are awful. They don't know how to attract diverse kids or hang on to them. I don't want to be around when someone actually figures out the costs of those dropouts. There is a huge cost to all of those dropouts.*

Other leaders are comfortable with the idea that many students who start college do not get a degree. As a government official said:

> *There is a difference between everyone finishing high school and everyone finishing college or university. At some point along the line people find that they have a sufficient amount of education to handle what they need. There are some who come with no particular intention of graduating.*

Our survey respondents reflect this same ambiguity. Business and faculty are less concerned about dropout rates, with fewer than a third saying that dropout rates are too high. By contrast, majorities of administrators and government officials think current dropout rates are too high (see Table 4).

Table 4

Dropout Rates

College dropout rates are currently:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Too high.	41%	26%	54%	55%	31%
About where they should be.	32%	39%	30%	27%	33%
Too low.	5%	9%	4%	1%	6%
Not sure.	22%	26%	12%	17%	31%

Consistent with this view, majorities of faculty and business people say that there are many people who are currently in college who shouldn't be there. Half of faculty members (50%) and 60% of business leaders agree that "many young people are wasting time and money in college because they don't know what else to do." Fewer administrators (46%) and government officials (44%) share this view.

There is wide agreement that much of the problem of under-preparation is due to the K–12 public schools: two in three (66%) say that most of the problems colleges have with student quality stem from failures in the K–12 system. Only 18% feel that colleges complain about the public schools to avoid taking responsibility for their own low academic and admission standards.

There is also agreement that part of the cure is to work more closely with

K–12 schools. Leaders almost unanimously (91%) believe that directly collaborating with K–12 schools to help prepare students for college is a very or somewhat effective way to address the problem.

Is the preparation and motivation of students improving, staying the same, or getting worse? Our respondents do not agree on the answer to this question. Those who work most closely with students—professors and administrators—are convinced that the situation is getting worse. Sixty-eight percent of professors and 54% of administrators feel that compared to ten years ago, today's college students are less prepared and motivated. Government and business people are more optimistic and more likely to think that the situation is either the same or better than in the past (see Table 5).

Table 5

How Today's College Students Compare to Those Ten Years Ago

Compared to ten years ago, college students today are:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Less prepared and motivated	52%	68%	54%	43%	43%
About the same as ten years ago	29%	20%	29%	36%	31%
More prepared and motivated	15%	10%	12%	18%	19%

While college professors put much of the blame on K–12 schools, they also seem to be willing to acknowledge that they themselves are part of the problem. College professors are much more likely than the other groups to identify grade inflation in college as a problem. Seventy-three percent of professors see this as a very or somewhat serious problem (compared to 58% of government officials, 56% of administrators, and 55% of business leaders). Professors are also somewhat more likely to acknowledge that colleges have let their own standards slip. More than two in three professors (68%) think it is problematic that too many colleges have academic standards that are too low (compared to 61% of business people, 56% of administrators, and 55% of government leaders who feel this way). One professor described the situation in his own university this way:

> *We have an evaluation mechanism which determines 60% of our salary; many professors feel they have to be entertainers, and give the students good grades so they will get good evaluations and a pay raise.*

Part II: Areas of Disagreement

Although there are high levels of agreement regarding the overall picture of higher education, this consensus falls apart when we come to some of the details. The tensions are typically greatest between college faculty and business people, with college administrators and government officials often falling somewhere between these two groups.

FINDING SEVEN

Business leaders and academics disagree about how well colleges and systems of higher education are operated.

The most extreme disagreements that we saw concerned the operation of colleges, universities, and systems of higher education. Those who are outside the academy, especially those who come from a business perspective, often feel that higher education should be held accountable to the same standards of cost and efficiency that are applied to other institutions. When they look at higher education from that perspective, they are often dismayed by what they see. As one business leader said:

> *What is the biggest weakness of higher education in America today? In my judgement it is that we are not providing education in a cost-effective way. We have built up this excellent system, but the unit costs have gone up while the unit costs of almost everything else have gone down.*

College professors reject the notion that higher education should conform to these standards. Administrators and government officials fall somewhere between the business leaders and professors. Many of those we talked to who are closest to the academy argue that the mission of higher education requires that it not be judged by the same standards of efficiency and cost effectiveness that might be applied to other endeavors. As one academic insider said:

> *A significant increase in the efficiency of higher education is just not possible. For example, it takes the same number of hours to perform a Mozart symphony today as it did when Mozart wrote that symphony. In the same way, it takes the same amount of hours to handle teacher-student contact as it always has.*

Table 6

Do Colleges Need to Become More Efficient?

% saying very or somewhat close to own view:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Business and government have had to become leaner and more efficient—higher education must now do the same	65%	40%	66%	70%	83%

We asked our respondents if they think that adopting business practices to increase productivity and lower costs would improve higher education. An overwhelming percentage of those from business (92%) say that this would be either very or somewhat effective. Far fewer professors (52%) agree.

The disagreement becomes even starker when we pose the idea that higher education must now go through the same kind of retrenchment and re-engineering that business has undergone in recent years. Eighty-three percent of business

people say that "business and government have had to become leaner and more efficient—higher education must now do the same." But only 40% of college professors agree; in fact, 56% reject this view. Administrators and government officials fall between the two (see Table 6).

Table 7

How Much Can Higher Education Learn From Business?

Which comes closer to your own view?

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Higher education has a lot to learn from the private sector—adopting more business practices will make colleges more efficient and productive.	40%	17%	40%	39%	64%
OR					
There's a limit to how much higher education can learn from the private sector—the fundamental mission of colleges is quality education, not efficiency or productivity.	54%	77%	55%	54%	29%

Indeed, faculty members and business people disagree about how much higher education can learn from business. As Table 7 shows, 64% of business leaders think that higher education has a lot to learn from the private sector. But 77% of professors take an opposite stand: that business methods have limited application to higher education.

Many of those we spoke to from within the academy are scornful of the idea that higher education should model itself after business. As one university administrator put it:

> *For every professor who is sitting on his laurels, there is more than one Dilbert. I think there is very little awareness of how much corporate culture is irrational and plays to some of the baser instincts.*

Another educator said:

> *I am not impressed with the consequences of the re-engineering in business. The net result has been a social impact that has been incredibly destructive.*

Many of the critics of higher education are equally outraged by what they see as a refusal of higher education to take responsibility for its outcomes. As a member of our leadership panel from outside the education community said:

> *Please, everyone else is accepting some responsibility for what they are doing. What about higher education?*

Business leaders also argue that the colleges have passed on to students the cost of their own inefficiencies. Seventy-two percent of business people either fully or partially endorse the idea that "the easy availability of student loans allows colleges to keep raising tuition instead of improving efficiency and cutting costs." Faculty, by contrast, reject this view, with only 25% saying this is very or somewhat close to what they think. Here again, administrators and government officials fall in the middle, with 37% of administrators and 51% of government officials holding this view.

FINDING EIGHT

Although leaders across sectors agree that students need to learn thinking and communication skills, business leaders disagree with educators about the performance of higher education in teaching students what they need to know, and also about the importance of other goals such as training students in the humanities.

At the most general level, there is agreement among our respondents about what college students need to learn. Nearly everyone agrees that the most important skills for students to acquire are to be able to think creatively and independently, and to communicate effectively in speaking and writing.

- Eighty-nine percent of the overall sample say that ensuring that students graduate with top-notch writing, speaking, and communication skills is absolutely essential.
- Eighty-five percent of leaders overall endorse the goal of teaching students to be creative, independent thinkers.

But after these top level goals are agreed upon, the consensus starts to fall apart, with the most extreme differences generally occurring between professors and business leaders. One area of disagreement has to do with the performance of colleges and universities in their educational mission. By margins of approximately three to one, professors and administrators say that colleges are teaching students what they need to know. As Table 8 shows, this conviction drops off as we move from those who work in higher education to those who hire the graduates, with business executives being less likely to agree.

Table 8

Are Colleges Teaching the Right Things?

In general, would you say today's colleges:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Teach students the things that are important to know?	59%	59%	70%	60%	46%
OR					
Fail to teach what is important?	25%	22%	22%	21%	35%

Another area of disagreement is the importance of other goals such as giving students an exposure to the humanities. The educators we interviewed take pride in their emphasis on the liberal arts, which they regard as essential to teaching students to take a role in the adult world. Responding to the survey, 55% of faculty members say it is absolutely essential to give students a solid grounding in history, literature, philosophy, and the arts, and 50% say it is absolutely

essential to give students a grounding in the sciences. Many of the professors we spoke to stressed the importance of the liberal arts. As one educator said:

> *There should be an institution that retains the values of the arts, otherwise we will have another Dark Ages. If you are suddenly going to turn in another direction and forget the traditional educational values, you will never get them back again.*

Professors worry most that there is a decreased emphasis on the liberal arts, with two in three (66%) saying that this is a very or somewhat serious problem. As one professor said:

> *We don't have higher education, we have higher training. That is what industry wants, for us to put all the emphasis on training.*

Business executives, for their part, are less likely than faculty to give an absolute priority to giving students a grounding in history, literature, philosophy, and the arts (34% say these subjects are absolutely essential) or the sciences (42% say absolutely essential). Fewer than two in five business leaders (38%) identify a decreased emphasis on the liberal arts as a very or somewhat serious problem.

FINDING NINE

Business executives want higher education to cut costs and students to pay more before coming to government for more funding. Other leaders see government as the first line of support.

Nearly everyone we interviewed believes that colleges and universities are facing some tough financial times. One government official described the problem for state universities this way:

> *When you look at state funds you see that all of the money is gobbled up by specialized needs, and anything that is left goes to prisons. That leaves higher education as the budget balancer.*

There is widespread agreement on the easy solutions, such as better fundraising by colleges or better financial planning by students and their families:

- Ninety-two percent of the overall sample strongly or somewhat favor meeting cost increases by having colleges raise more money from alumni, businesses, and foundations.
- Seventy-eight percent of leaders overall say that too many families fail to plan ahead and save adequately for the costs of college.

Table 9

How to Deal With Rising Costs of Attending College

% strongly or somewhat favoring the following proposals if the costs of attending college across the nation continue to rise:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Colleges raising more money from alumni, businesses and foundations.	92%	94%	93%	93%	87%
State and federal government increasing financial support.	82%	95%	90%	79%	65%
Colleges reducing operating costs.	73%	56%	67%	80%	88%
Students and their parents paying more.	57%	51%	59%	53%	65%

There is also agreement that state and federal government should pay more money for higher education if costs continue to rise; 82% either strongly or somewhat support the idea that government should help defray future cost increases.

Where leaders disagree is on how the responsibility should be shared among government, colleges themselves, and students and their families. As Table 9 indicates, college professors and administrators almost unanimously favor increased state and federal government support for higher education, as well as colleges raising more money from alumni, businesses, and foundations. A much weaker majority of professors (56%) favor higher education reducing its operating costs. Business executives take the opposite view, and are much more likely to think that higher

education belt-tightening is the way to deal with future cost increases. In effect, the message that the business community is sending to higher education is this: "Cut your own costs before you go looking for more support from the government."

The same finding emerged when we asked our respondents which one of these responses they favor most. Business leaders are most supportive of seeing colleges cut costs, with 57% saying they support this the most. By contrast, increased government support is most likely to be selected as the favored option by the three other leadership groups.

Table 10

Responsibility for the Costs of Higher Education: The View of Leaders

% saying this is very or somewhat close to own view:

	Total	Profs.	Admin./Deans	Gov't.	Business
Since society benefits from having a large number of college graduates, taxpayers should pay more of the cost of a college education.	44%	49%	48%	49%	30%
Since students reap the benefits of going to college, they and their families should be responsible for paying most of its costs.	43%	34%	35%	39%	62%

The respondents from business also have a higher expectation of what they expect students and their families to do. We asked our respondents to relate the benefits received from higher education to the amount that should be paid. Business leaders are much more likely to say that, since students receive the benefit of going to college, they and their families should pay most of its costs. The other groups are more likely to say that taxpayers should pay more of the costs since the benefits accrue to the society as a whole (see Table 10).

The perspective of business leaders differs rather dramatically on this issue from the views held by the general public. In our 1998 study *The Price of Admission*, we presented a somewhat similar set of choices to the public.[4] As Table 11 shows, the public is unclear about the role of either colleges or government, with no consensus about which of these groups should be asked to take on a greater role in helping to finance college. But there is nearly universal agreement that students and their families are already doing everything they can, and that they should not be asked to do more.

Table 11

Responsibility for the Costs of Higher Education: The View of the Public

Who should make sacrifices if it became more difficult for colleges and universities in your state to admit everyone who is qualified?

	General Public
Students and their families should do more to help by paying higher fees.	11%
OR	
They are doing pretty much all they can already.	85%
Faculty and administrators at colleges and universities should do more to help by teaching more classes and cutting costs.	44%
OR	
They are doing pretty much all they can already.	49%
Taxpayers and state government should do more to help by devoting more tax dollars to solving this problem.	46%
OR	
They are doing pretty much all they can already.	49%

Source: John Immerwahr, *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education* (San Jose: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and Public Agenda, 1998).

FINDING TEN

Business executives want professors to teach more, focus more on research that is relevant to society, and rely more on technology.

The disagreement among leaders extends to what college faculty should be doing. Business executives would like to see college professors spend more time teaching and spend less time on research. Fifty-eight percent of business leaders think it is a somewhat or very serious problem that too many professors have light teaching loads, while only 26% of professors agree with this view. While majorities of all four groups think that higher education places too much emphasis on research over teaching, business executives are somewhat more likely to say that too much of academic research is irrelevant to the needs of society, with 51% of business executives endorsing this view as opposed to only 39% of professors (see Table 12).

Table 12

Are Colleges Doing the Right Things?

% saying the following is a very or somewhat serious problem for colleges

	Total	Profs	Admin./Deans	Gov't	Business
Too many colleges emphasize research over teaching.	57%	54%	60%	56%	59%
Too many professors have light teaching loads.	48%	26%	50%	59%	58%
Too much of the research conducted in higher education is irrelevant to the needs of society.	45%	39%	44%	44%	51%

While a solid majority of leaders overall (74%) agree that technology will have a major impact on higher education, there is disagreement about what this impact will be. Business executives have much greater hope for the benefits of using technology in colleges and universities. Of those who think that technology will soon change higher education, 62% of business executives think these changes will be for the better, compared to only 25% of professors (see Table 13). Again, administrators and government fall in between. The idea that technology can simultaneously improve quality and decrease costs seems especially attractive to many people outside higher education. As one business executive said:

> *Which would you rather have, a 350-person class in beginning whatever, taught by an assistant professor, or a set of video cassettes from a superb educator who can really convey the knowledge? I'd choose the latter.*

Many of the professors we talked to are less convinced, and feel that ideas such as distance-learning are time-consuming fads that will not provide quality education. As an academic administrator put it:

The shift that everyone talks about is the growth of distance and electronic education. We have all sorts of articles about the virtual university, but I think it is rather like the articles from 10 years ago predicting the death of the mainframe. The champions of virtual universities misunderstand the value of face-to-face interchange.

Table 13

Assessing the Future Impact of Technology on Higher Education

*Will the changes from technology on higher education be for the better, for the worse, or will it be mixed?**

	Total	Profs.	Admin./Deans	Gov't.	Business
Changes will be for the better.	48%	25%	48%	54%	62%
Changes will be for the worse.	4%	7%	5%	2%	1%
Mixed.	47%	66%	46%	43%	36%

* This question was asked only of those who said technology will fundamentally change higher education in the near future (n = 439)

FINDING ELEVEN

The institution of tenure makes more sense to those who have it than to anyone else.

Table 14

Leadership Views of the Tenure System

% saying the following is very or somewhat close to own view:

	Total	Tenured Profs.	Non-Tenured Profs.	Admin./ Deans	Gov't.	Business
Tenure sometimes protects incompetent faculty.	85%	74%	68%	87%	84%	95%
The tenure system is inflexible and limits administrators' ability to improve schools and departments.	63%	31%	36%	72%	63%	83%
Tenure is a good way to reward accomplished professors.	52%	81%	64%	47%	51%	37%
Tenure is essential to protecting academic freedom.	46%	78%	62%	42%	48%	22%

Tenure is a source of disagreement between professors and virtually everyone else. Professors, especially those who have tenure, think that it is an appropriate way to reward strong professors and a valuable protection for academic freedom. As Table 14 shows, tenure is much less appealing to the other groups of leaders, and is least appealing to members of the business community. Several of the leaders interviewed distinguish between the goal of protecting academic freedom, which they support, and the institution of tenure, which makes little sense to them. As one business executive said:

> *The concept behind tenure is one that I would like to preserve, namely that leading academicians are free from political influence. But how we are implementing that concept is atrocious. After seven years you give someone a lifetime contract? That is a silly way, in my judgment, to preserve academic freedom.*

The bottom line is that more than eight out of ten business executives (83%) think that phasing out tenure would improve higher education, while fewer than one in four professors (23%) share this view.

Table 15

The Tenure System Should Be Modified, Not Eliminated

The system of tenure for college professors should:

	Total	Tenured Profs.	Non-Tenured Profs.	Admin./ Deans	Gov't.	Business
Be modified but not eliminated	56%	52%	52%	61%	59%	51%
Be phased out altogether	26%	8%	14%	29%	21%	44%
Remain as is	15%	39%	28%	9%	15%	1%

Despite this disagreement, however, there are some points of commonality. One of the biggest complaints about tenure is that it sometimes protects incompetent faculty members, a view that is shared

by more than eight out of ten administrators, government officials, and business people. But college faculty members also acknowledge this, including 74% of tenured faculty members who agree that this statement is very or somewhat close to their view. When we asked our respondents if they want to phase out tenure, modify it, or keep it exactly the same, we found a convergence of views. As Table 15 shows, a minority of professors—both those with tenure and those without—think tenure should be unchanged. The most common response among all groups is to modify, but not eliminate, the tenure system.

Table 16

Ranking of Four Ways to Improve Colleges

% saying this is the MOST important change to make to higher education:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Raising academic and admission standards.	36%	43%	29%	37%	36%
OR					
Increasing state and federal funding.	32%	41%	40%	34%	13%
OR					
Cutting costs and improving the efficiency of college administration.	24%	13%	23%	24%	37%
OR					
Phasing out the tenure system.	9%	3%	10%	7%	17%

Even the toughest critics of tenure—business people—do not think it is the biggest problem facing colleges. We gave leaders a choice of four possible steps to change higher education, and asked which was the most important. The choices were increasing government funding, raising standards, cutting costs, and phasing out tenure. Not surprisingly, administrators think that increasing funding is the most important step, professors and government officials want to raise standards, and business leaders want to cut costs and increase efficiency. But as Table 16 shows, phasing out tenure ranks low on the list for all leadership groups.

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FINDING TWELVE

When it comes to racial balance in the nation's colleges, business leaders are more apt to say things should evolve naturally; the other three leadership groups prefer a more proactive approach. Very few in any group favor quotas.

Debates about affirmative action in higher education have stretched from the *Bakke* decision in 1978 to the recent legal battles and debate about Proposition 209 in California. Not surprisingly, those disagreements manifest themselves in the responses to our survey. The disagreement starts when we look at graduation rates. For administrators and government officials, the small percentages of African-Americans and Hispanics graduating from college is disturbing. Eighty-four percent of college administrators identify this as a very or somewhat serious problem, a view that is shared by an identical percentage of government officials. College faculty are somewhat less likely to be concerned, with 68% defining this as a problem, and concern among business leaders is even lower, with a bare majority (54%) identifying it as a problem.

There is also disagreement about how to handle racial and ethnic balance in college admissions. We gave our respondents three alternatives for how to deal with this issue: paying no attention to race at all, setting specific targets and working to insure they are met, or monitoring race and making special efforts to recruit qualified minority students. As Table 17 indicates, there is little support in any group for setting specific racial targets. Disagreement surfaces, however, over what else should be done. Business leaders are the least enthusiastic of the four groups concerning special efforts to recruit African-American or Hispanic students; 43% of business leaders would prefer having higher education pay no attention to race and allow things to evolve naturally. Other leaders favor a more proactive stance, with higher education taking steps to increase the number of minority students attending college, but without adopting

Table 17

How to Address Levels of College Attendance by African-Americans and Hispanics

How should colleges deal with issues concerning the number of African-American and Hispanic students who attend their schools?

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Keep an eye on the racial composition of their student body and make a special effort to recruit qualified minority students if too few attend.	59%	59%	67%	68%	41%
OR					
Pay no attention to race and ethnicity and allow things to evolve naturally.	25%	28%	12%	18%	43%
OR					
Set specific targets for minority student enrollment and work to insure they are met.	11%	7%	18%	11%	9%

anything that looks like a quota.

From the business perspective, the focus on race and other politicized issues is a side issue for higher education. Indeed, business leaders are much more likely to think that "too many college campuses are distracted by disputes over issues like sexual harassment and politics of ethnic groups." Six out of ten business people (61%) identify this focus as a somewhat or very serious problem, as opposed to 41% of professors, 35% of administrators, and 36% of government officials.

Table 18

Opportunity to Get a College Education

% saying this group has less opportunity than others to get a college education:

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Qualified students from low-income families.	45%	54%	36%	51%	41%
Qualified students from middle-class families.	35%	33%	41%	33%	33%
Qualified students who are African-American or Hispanic.	30%	32%	31%	39%	20%
Qualified students who are older and going back to school for retraining.	30%	31%	37%	30%	23%

That there is little support among leaders for achieving racial balance through specific targets may be because leaders are not convinced that racial minorities have a more severe problem with access to higher education than others have. We asked respondents which groups have less opportunity than others to get a higher education. As Table 18 indicates, there is no clear consensus about which groups have the greatest problem getting a higher education. But in no leadership group does a majority believe African-Americans or Hispanics have less opportunity than others have.

Several leaders we spoke with were concerned that, regardless of the current situation, higher education will soon be facing a massive increase in the number of minority students seeking access to higher education. One university administrator put it this way:

> *When the baby boomers were coming along in the 1960s, we built an incredible academic infrastructure. The federal government spent billions of dollars creating colleges and universities. I don't hear about that now. I wonder if the lack of response is because of the racial mix of students in the pipeline.*

We asked our respondents whether they had heard about the projections that there will be a significant increase in the number of students attending college, and that a larger proportion of these students will be members of minority groups.[5] This problem is clearly on the minds of administrators and government officials, with 76% and 63% saying that they have heard specifically about these projections. Only 45% of faculty members say that this has come to their attention, and the majority of business people are unaware of this possibility

Table 19

Awareness That Some Experts Expect a Significant Change in the College Population

Have you heard something specifically about the potential for a significant increase in the number and diversity of students attending college?

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Yes, have heard	54%	45%	76%	63%	33%
No, have not heard	39%	45%	22%	29%	60%

(see Table 19).

We also asked leaders whether the nation's system of higher education would be prepared to handle such an influx if it were to occur. The majority of leaders (71%) say that colleges are at least somewhat prepared for such an influx.

Conclusion

The disagreements between business executives and educators are sometimes wide-ranging. From the perspective of business people, higher education should be more efficient and financially accountable, more focused on what the students really need to learn, and more mindful of the need to cut costs and charge students more before asking for more subsidies from the public till. They also want higher education to be less preoccupied with issues of race, and more focused on teaching. Higher education professionals, for their part, see the universities as serving a different mission, and vigorously object to the idea that higher education should be judged by the standards of efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of business.

Rough Sailing Ahead?

If these disputes remain unresolved, higher education will certainly face severe problems as it tries to navigate a future that nearly everyone agrees will be difficult. Clearly, higher education is going to be dependent on the support of the larger community, and it is not clear how forthcoming that support will be if a group as important as the business community continues to harbor deep doubts about such basic questions as how well higher education is administered or how effectively it performs its teaching mission.

The Real Bar to Access: Poor Academic Preparation

These disagreements, as important as they may be, have to be contextualized by the larger framework of commonality. None of the disagreements undermine the shared assumption of the importance of maintaining a strong higher education system and of insuring that qualified students have access to it. And for all of their disagreements, the leaders we interviewed agree with each other on the major problem that faces higher education—the lack of preparation of the students who enter our higher education system. What the leaders seem to be saying is that higher education cannot do the job alone; we cannot hope to produce an educated society without finding a way to produce larger numbers of students who are sufficiently prepared and motivated to take advantage of the world's finest system of higher education.

Supporting Tables

Table A

Problems Facing Colleges

Q: Here are some things that may or may not be a problem for colleges. Please indicate how serious a problem you think each is:

% saying very or somewhat serious

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Too many new students need remedial education.	88	86	86	91	88
The debt students must take on to pay for college is too high.	83	77	89	86	78
Too few African-Americans and Hispanics graduate from college.	73	68	84	84	54
Grade inflation.	61	73	56	58	55
Too many colleges have academic standards that are too low.	60	68	56	55	61
Too many colleges emphasize research over teaching.	57	54	60	56	59
A decreased emphasis on the liberal arts curriculum.	56	66	61	58	38
High costs discourage too many qualified students from going to college.	56	48	55	63	56
Too much political infighting between and among faculty and administrators.	54	59	56	46	56
Too many colleges are unprepared for today's diverse student population.	50	46	57	53	43
Too many professors are underpaid.	49	71	43	48	33
Too many professors have light teaching loads.	48	26	50	59	58
Too many students who are in college would be better off pursuing careers in the technical trades.	48	47	44	46	58
Too many colleges are poorly managed financially.	47	47	46	39	56
Too much of the research conducted in higher education is irrelevant to the needs of society.	45	39	44	44	51
Too many college campuses are distracted by disputes over issues like sexual harassment and politics of ethnic groups.	43	41	35	36	61

Total = 601, college professors = 130, college administrators and deans = 163, government = 162, business = 146. "Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or to the omission of some answer categories.

Table B

Students and Families

Q: How close does each of the following come to your own view?

% saying very or somewhat close

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Too many families fail to plan ahead and save adequately for the costs of college.	78	68	79	76	88
Students appreciate the value of their college education only when they have some personal responsibility for paying its costs.	73	61	72	78	79
Students should be required by their colleges to learn civic responsibility by doing some community service.	63	55	71	63	63
Too many students feel they are entitled to a college education regardless of their academic qualifications.	59	66	59	54	57
Many young people are wasting time and money in college because they don't know what else to do.	50	50	46	44	60
Since society benefits from having a large number of college graduates, taxpayers should pay more of the cost of a college education.	44	49	48	49	30
Since students reap the benefits of going to college, they and their families should be responsible for paying most of its costs.	43	34	35	39	62
Today's college students take their education more seriously than previous generations.	26	19	29	30	25

Total = 601, college professors = 130, college administrators and deans = 163, government = 162, business = 146. "Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

Table C

Attitudes Toward Colleges and Higher Education

Q: How close does each of the following come to your view?

% saying very or somewhat close

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
A strong higher education system is key to the continued economic growth and progress of the U.S.	97	96	99	97	94
Society should not allow the price of a college education to prevent qualified and motivated students from attending college.	92	97	91	95	84
The nation's colleges are a crucial source of technological and scientific innovation.	92	93	93	94	87
Because a college education is the ticket to middle-class life it is crucial that it be affordable to everyone.	75	68	80	84	67
Our system of higher education is the best in the world.	73	65	81	80	65
Business and government have had to become leaner and more efficient—higher education must now do the same.	65	40	66	70	83
Too often, colleges are run by highly bureaucratic administrations that resist change and progress.	62	61	50	73	65
There are too many colleges chasing too few good students, so colleges have lowered their standards to admit less qualified students.	46	54	43	43	45
The easy availability of student loans allows colleges to keep raising tuition instead of improving efficiency and cutting costs.	46	25	37	51	72
We should be very cautious about making changes to our higher education system—they could easily cause more harm than good.	41	52	38	38	35

Total = 601, college professors = 130, college administrators and deans = 163, government = 162, business = 146. "Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

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Table D

The Goals of a College Education

Q: Here are different goals colleges can focus on. For each, please indicate how important this is to a college education.

% saying absolutely essential

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Ensuring students graduate with top-notch writing, speaking and communication skills.	89	90	88	95	82
Teaching students to be creative, independent thinkers.	85	85	88	83	82
Holding students to high academic standards.	82	88	77	88	76
Giving students a solid grounding in history, literature, philosophy and the arts.	50	55	54	56	34
Giving students a solid grounding in the sciences.	49	50	49	54	42
Teaching students high-tech skills demanded by today's workplace.	45	33	53	48	44
Training students to be leaders.	43	41	47	38	45
Teaching students foreign languages and a global perspective.	33	39	38	31	25
Exposing students to histories and traditions of minority groups.	20	22	27	16	13

Total = 601, college professors = 130, college administrators and deans = 163, government = 162, business = 146. "Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

Table E

Ways to Improve Higher Education

Q: Here are some proposals intended to improve higher education. Please indicate how effective each would be in improving colleges.

% saying very or somewhat effective

	Total	*Profs.*	*Admin./Deans*	*Gov't.*	*Business*
Directly collaborating with local K–12 schools to help prepare their students for college.	91	81	94	95	95
Making trade and technical school a more appealing option for high school graduates who are not qualified for college.	89	91	83	89	94
Increasing state and federal funding for higher education.	80	89	88	77	65
Raising student admission standards.	76	84	65	75	79
Adopting business practices to increase productivity and lower costs.	74	52	75	76	92
Encouraging colleges to specialize their programs so they appeal to different students and funding sources.	70	54	72	78	74
Reducing costs through greater reliance on new technologies such as distance-learning.	59	32	54	73	76
Phasing out the tenure system.	54	23	57	54	83
Having state governments exercise closer scrutiny and regulation of colleges.	29	13	23	45	34

Total = 601, college professors = 130, college administrators and deans = 163, government = 162, business = 146. "Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

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Endnotes

[1] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1997, NCES 98-015 (Washington, D.C.: 1997), pp. 173, 214.

[2] John Immerwahr, *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education* (San Jose: The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and Public Agenda, 1998), p. 5. This report was based on a national telephone survey of 700 adults conducted February 2–8, 1998.

[3] Immerwahr, *The Price of Admission*, p. 7.

[4] Immerwahr, *The Price of Admission*, p. 12.

[5] Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and The College Board, *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1996–2012* (1998), pp. 9, 26.

Methodology

This study reports the views of 601 leaders in academia, government and business who responded to a mail survey conducted in the fall of 1998. Public Agenda mailed an invitation to participate along with the questionnaire to a sample of 3,930 individuals selected as follows:

- College professors: 750 professors from both public and private colleges and from two- and four-year institutions, randomly selected from a list provided by Market Data Retrieval.
- College administrators and deans: 750 from both public and private colleges and from two- and four-year institutions, randomly selected from a list provided by Market Data Retrieval.
- Business: 1,430 CEOs, owners, presidents, or general managers of companies with 50 or more employees, randomly selected from a list provided by Dunn and Bradstreet.
- Government: 1,000 legislators and advisors at both the state and federal level, including education advisors to governors and representatives from the state governing boards of both community colleges and four-year institutions. Names were taken from Leadership Directory's *Congressional Yellow Book Summer 1997*, *The Capitol Source*, the National Governors' Association's *Governors' Staff Directory, March 1998*, and lists provided by the National Conference of State Legislatures and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO).

The initial mailing of the questionnaire was on September 16, 1998, followed shortly by a postcard reminder and a second mailing of the questionnaire. All data in this report are based on questionnaires returned by October 16, 1998. The mailings resulted in a total of 601 returned questionnaires, as follows:

- College professors: 130
- College administrators and deans: 163
- Business: 146
- Government: 162

"Total" percentages represent the average calculated after weighting each group to 150 respondents, so that each group of leaders has an equal impact on the reported total.

The questionnaire stressed that, unless otherwise indicated, we were concerned with both two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, as well as both state and private higher education. Design of the survey instrument and all interpretation of the data in the report were done by Public Agenda.

In preparation for the study, the author conducted a series of interviews with a leadership panel of 14 experts in the field, representing a variety of different perspectives on higher education (listed below). In addition, focus groups were moderated by the author at two conferences, one with college faculty (June 14, 1998, in Cincinnati) and another with legislators and legislative staff (July 22, 1998, in Las Vegas). Quotes were drawn from the leadership panel and focus groups to give voice to the attitudes captured statistically through the survey. These were supplemented by interviews conducted by telephone with respondents who agreed to be contacted after the survey.

Leadership Panel

Dr. John Brademas
President Emeritus
New York University

Dr. Doug D. Christensen
Commissioner of Education
State of Nebraska

Charles E. Cobb Jr.
Cobb Partners, Inc.

John W. Creighton
Senior Advisor
Weyerhaeuser Company

Dr. Karen Cummings
Clinical Assistant Professor in Physics
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr.
Vice Chancellor for Student and
Educational Development
Maricopa Community Colleges

Governor Daniel J. Evans
Board of Regents
University of Washington

Kati Haycock
Director
Education Trust

Dr. Daniel J. Larson
Dean of the Everly College of Science
Pennsylvania State University

Dr. Edward A. Lynch
Associate Professor of Political Science
Hollins University

Scott Miller
Director of the National Task Force on Minority
High Achievement
The College Board

Dr. Wentworth Ofuatey-Kodjoe
Executive Officer, Political Science Department
Graduate School and University Center at CUNY

Dr. Anne A. Paolucci
Chairwoman of Board of Trustees
City University of New York

Adam Yarmolinsky
Regents Professor of Public Policy
University of Maryland

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About the Author

John Immerwahr is a Senior Research Fellow at Public Agenda. He is also Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Villanova University.

Dr. Immerwahr is the author of several previous Public Agenda reports on higher education, including *The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education* (1998), *Preserving the Higher Education Legacy: A Conversation with California Leaders* (1995) and *The Closing Gateway: Californians Consider Their Higher Education System* (1993). In addition, he has authored and co-authored a number of other Public Agenda reports on education, including the groundbreaking national study, *First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools* (1994) and, for the 1996 National Education Summit of the nation's governors and business leaders, *Americans' Views on Standards: An Assessment by Public Agenda* (1996). Other state-specific studies written by Dr. Immerwahr include *What Our Children Need: South Carolinians Look at Public Education* (1997), *Committed to Change: Missouri Citizens and Public Education* (1996), and *The Broken Contract: Connecticut Citizens Look at Public Education* (1993).

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98-3 *Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor's Office*, by James B. Hunt Jr., Governor of North Carolina and Chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (June 1998). An address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

98-4 *Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education*, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman and Leobardo F. Estrada

(September 1998). Finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

98-5 *The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California*, by David W. Breneman (September 1998). Concludes that the next governor should give serious consideration to exploring a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

98-6 *Federal Tuition Tax Credits and State Higher Education Policy: A Guide for State Policy Makers*, by Kristin D. Conklin (December 1998). Examines the implications of the new federal income tax provisions on students and their families, and makes recommendations for state higher education policy.

98-7 *Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences*, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998). Describes the structural relationships that affect institutional efficacy in higher education, and argues that effective state policy achieves a balance between institutional and market forces.

98-8 *The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research*, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness (December 1998). Argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

99-1 *Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectation of Higher Education*, by John Immerwahr (January 1999). Reports the views of those most involved with decision-making about higher education, based on a survey and focus groups conducted by Public Agenda.

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